



United Teachers of Lowell

AFTMA/AFT/AFL-CIO

LOCAL 495

169 Merrimack St.

Lowell, MA 01852

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March 12, 2021

Honorable Mayor Leahy and School Committee Members,

On behalf of the United Teachers of Lowell Racial Justice Committee and Executive Board Members, we extend an invitation to all of you to join with us in passing the enclosed MCAS Resolution which urges our MA officials to seek and obtain a testing waiver from the US Department of Education and cancel this year's (2020-2021) MCAS tests.

We trust that the links and documents provided herein will provide you with significant evidence enabling you to make an informed decision. We urge you to pass this "Suspend MCAS Resolution" and join us in reaching out to the Governor, Education Secretary and State Legislature about the urgent need to cancel MCAS tests this year.

Sincerely,

Representatives of the UTL Racial Justice Committee

Donna Newcomb, Special Ed. Teacher, LHS

Ralph Saint Louis, Biology Teacher, LHS

Karen Walton, Special Ed. Teacher, Shaughnessy School

Mickie Dumont, UTL Director of Operations



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March 12, 2021

The United Teachers of Lowell (UTL) is in support of all Massachusetts officials and School Committees in obtaining a testing waiver from the US Department of Education and canceling this year's MCAS tests. The COVID-19 emergency and prolonged interruption in traditional learning will continue to render an insurmountable obstacle to the educational equity, academic progress, and most importantly, the social emotional stability of many Lowell students.

WHEREAS standardized tests at the conclusion of a year-long pandemic cannot possibly measure student learning and achievement with any validity; daily testing prep for one to two months will only lead to increased emotional instability causing all our students to fall further behind; and delay academic recovery as resources and instructional time are reallocated to disingenuous learning for test preparation; and

WHEREAS due to the COVID 19 Pandemic, and the current on-going safety precautions and restrictions, teachers and students will have to learn how to do things in new ways; consequently, additional professional development will need to be provided for all staff; and

WHEREAS educators must focus on compensating for inequitable learning, implementing a standardized assessment that educators cannot act upon until months later will not mitigate any issues beyond state accountability responsibilities. Teacher and district assessments provide much more meaningful and timely information about an individual student's knowledge, skills and needs; and

WHEREAS students coming back from a year long absence of traditional education, with tremendous social emotional needs, it is both egregious and unconscionable to now administer a traditional high stakes test that no one is either prepared for or deserves at this time; and the demands of an inequitable assessment will only bring more harm and anxiety to our already compromised and traumatized students; and

WHEREAS in November, delegates to the MA Association of School Committees (MASC) voted overwhelmingly, by 112-9, in favor of a resolution calling on the state to suspend MCAS testing this year and more than 30 individual school committees have passed their own similar resolutions to MASC Resolution #1, calling for an MCAS suspension and re-affirming the vote of the MASC delegates; and

WHEREAS Lowell teachers and administrators currently have adequate and well- informed data gleaned from district led and appropriated tests like iReady, Lexia, Flights, F/P, and district end of unit assessments to gauge and measure student needs and achievement, multiple times a year, an added standardized test would only serve to heighten students' worry and anxiety at a critical time when focus should be on social emotional supports and relevant instructional opportunities; and

WHEREAS standardized tests are inherently biased against the very students they claim to benefit low-income, Black, Latinx, English Language Learners, and Students with Disabilities; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that with respect to the administration of MCAS as a measure of student and district achievement, the UTL and Lowell School Committee seek a suspension of this year's MCAS tests due to the negative impact and effect Covid-19 has had on Lowell students and urges the district to instead use current and reliable district assessment tools to inform instruction moving forward.

<https://massteacher.org/news/2020/08/mcas-moratorium-testimony>

<https://www.masslive.com/politics/2019/06/bill-calls-for-moratorium-on-mcas-as-massachusetts-graduation-requirement.html>

<https://malegislature.gov/Bills/192/SD1855>

<http://ma.aft.org/news/standardized-tests-and-pandemic>

<https://www.citizensforpublicschools.org/dear-senators-and-representatives/?fbclid=IwAR2APokwH4fRpy-DPcSLYhlBxtW3hcUCmpcxktKlV3Y8nKs8JYMnVMWSHms>

**AFT-MASSACHUSETTS**[\(http://ma.aft.org/\)](http://ma.aft.org/)[HOME \(HTTP://MA.AFT.ORG/\)](http://ma.aft.org/)[ABOUT US ▼](#)[NEWS ▼](#)[MEMBERSHIP ▼](#)[ACTIONS & EVENTS ▼](#)

AFT Massachusetts Responds to New Federal Standardized Testing Guidance

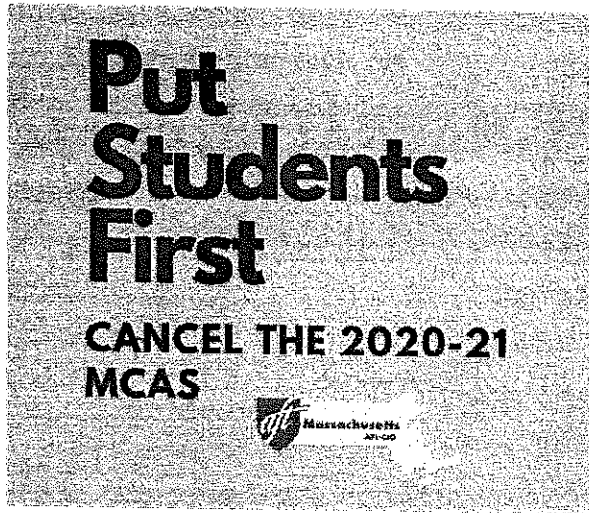
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On February 21, the U.S. Education Department announced that it will not waive the requirement for states to administer standardized testing in schools this year, but will instead give state's flexibility to delay testing, shorten standardized tests, or hold testing online during the pandemic. AFT Massachusetts released the following statement in response:

"Standardized tests have always measured poverty, not learning. In the middle of a pandemic that has disproportionately affected Black, Latino, low-income, English learner and special education students, we don't need a test to tell us that those students have fallen behind," said AFT Massachusetts President Beth Kontos. "Students need more learning time, not more time spent preparing for and taking standardized tests."

The Education Department's new guidance also allows states to request waivers to be exempt from accountability measures related to the federally required testing.

"It's disappointing that the federal government bowed to pressure and maintained the federal testing requirement, but we're glad they acknowledged that this year's test administration must look different, and that no student should be brought back in person just



to take a test,” said President Kontos. “Now, the state needs to shorten the remaining test as much as possible, eliminate any punitive accountability measures linked to standardized testing, and reallocate test-related funding to where it’s really needed – in the classroom, helping students learn.”

Last week, Citizens for Public Schools (CPS), AFT Massachusetts, and 17 other organizations **sent a letter**

(<https://www.citizensforpublicschools.org/dear-senators-and-representatives/?fbclid=IwAR2APokwH4fRpy-DPcSLYhIBxtW3hcUCmpcxktKIV3Y8nKs8JYMnVMWSHms>) to state legislators urging them and state education officials to obtain a federal waiver from the U.S. Department of Education and suspend spring MCAS tests.

The other organizations included the NAACP-New England Area Conference, Lawyers for Civil Rights, the Massachusetts Education Justice Alliance, the Black Educators Alliance of Massachusetts, the Boston Network for Black Student Achievement, the Center for Law and Education, the Massachusetts Teachers Association, and the Boston Teachers Union.

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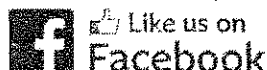
The letter reads, in part: “Standardized tests have never been an equitable measure of student learning, but in a time of pandemic cannot possibly measure student learning with any validity... Let teachers and students focus on staying healthy and problem-solving to sustain our education system and not have to worry about test prep. Test-related funding that can be re-allocated, that includes the annual \$30 million for the MCAS testing provider, should be spent on more urgent relief for schools and vulnerable students at this critical time.”

Bills have been filed in the legislature this session to **cancel MCAS for this year** (<https://malegislature.gov/Bills/192/SD1855>), and to **end high stakes testing and transform assessments**. (<https://malegislature.gov/Bills/192/SD409>)

Join CPS and **tell your school committee to pass a resolution to Suspend MCAS 2021!** (https://actionnetwork.org/letters/tell-your-school-committee-to-pass-a-resolution-to-suspend-mcas-2021?clear_id=true&source=direct_link)

[About CPS](#)[Legislative Priorities](#)[Join the campaign for an MCAS moratorium](#)[Join CPS](#)[Our Focus](#)[Charter Schools](#)[Opting Out of MCAS](#)[Blog: Stories of Life Under MCAS](#)[Blog: Boston Parents' Schoolyard News](#)You are here: [Home](#) / Dear Senators and Representatives,**SUPPORT CPS TODAY!**

Your support means CPS can continue fighting for public schools and bringing voices like Diane Ravitch, Jonathan Kozol and Pedro Noguera to town.

**WANT TO START A LOCAL CHAPTER OF CITIZENS FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS?**

Click [here](#) to read Pia Cisternino's description of how the Cambridge CPS chapter was launched and what they have accomplished and plan going forward. Click [here](#) to see the Cambridge CPS Facebook page. Contact us if you think you might want to start your own local chapter.

DO SOMETHING TODAY: SIGN THE LESS TESTING, MORE LEARNING PETITION

Join the thousands across Massachusetts who have signed onto this clarion call to end the misuse and overuse of standardized testing in our schools. More learning, less testing! To sign now, click [here](#).

Dear Senators and Representatives,

In light of the coronavirus (COVID-19) and its impact on our schools and students, we, the undersigned groups representing parents, educators, students and advocates for education justice, call on Massachusetts officials to seek and obtain a testing waiver from the U.S. Department of Education and cancel this year's MCAS tests.

We agree with business groups and others who oppose using MCAS results for high-stakes and accountability purposes, but we are absolutely convinced that MCAS testing itself should be suspended. Standardized tests have never been an equitable measure of student learning, but in a time of pandemic cannot possibly measure student learning with any validity. Testing will only mean that all students will lose precious learning time, while, disproportionately, Black, Latinx, low-income, English learners and special education students will fall even further behind.

It appears that *at least* five states have filed or are filing formal ESSA waiver requests with the federal government: Georgia, Maine, Michigan, Montana, New York.

Although Commissioner Riley and others maintain that MCAS testing this year is essential to diagnose students' progress during the pandemic, this is highly dubious:

Each student in grades 3 through 8 will be taking only a portion of the test in each subject. Therefore, the results for any one child will not be comparable to their previous scores or the scores of other children.

For an academic test to be valid, a student must have had a reasonable opportunity to learn the material on the test. Given the school closures during the pandemic, the inadequacy and inconsistencies of hybrid learning, and disparate access to Internet and computers at home, not all students will have had a reasonable opportunity to learn the content on the tests.

Contrary to the claims of those who advocate for testing this year, the tests will not collect valuable information that *teachers* can use to help students, as the results obtained will not be available until their students have moved on.

Moreover, teachers assess for gaps in student learning at the start of the school year and every day, with formal and informal measures. This might be more difficult during the pandemic, but MCAS results will tell them little if anything they don't already know.

Even before the pandemic, educators and testing experts like Daniel Koretz, Lorrie Shepard and many others have shared evidence that MCAS and other similar test-based accountability systems do not promote a high-quality education.

On the contrary, they tend to narrow the curriculum and take up time that could be used for engaging, project-based learning that promotes critical thinking. During a pandemic, it makes even less sense to devote time and resources to "pretending to make schools better," as Professor Koretz put it.

SIGN THE PETITION TO KEEP THE CAP ON CHARTER SCHOOLS!

Keep public funds in public schools: keep the cap on charters. Sign [here](#).

GET THE FACTS ON "FAMILIES FOR EXCELLENT SCHOOLS"

Read CPS's fact sheet on latest deep-pockets, out-of-state organization with a pro-charter school agenda to set up shop in Boston, joining Stand for Children and Democrats for Education Reform. Click [here](#) to read the facts. Click [here](#) for a more in-depth look at the Wall Street money fueling FES.

WORTH READING

[Worth Reading](#)

Dear Senators and Representatives, I Citizens for Public Schools

Fortunately, there is excellent work being done by the MA Consortium for Innovative Education Assessment (MCIEA) and others to develop innovative alternative assessments that are much better suited to promoting and measuring innovative approaches to teaching and learning than standardized tests. These assessments are flexible and can be adapted for remote or hybrid learning.

We applaud DESE's plan to allow high school seniors who have fulfilled all local graduation requirements but have not passed the ELA or math MCAS exams to graduate based on related coursework. We think this should be extended to this year's 10th and 11th graders.

Let teachers and students focus on staying healthy and problem-solving to sustain our education system and not have to worry about test prep. Test-related funding that can be re-allocated, that includes the annual \$30 million for the MCAS testing provider, should be spent on more urgent relief for schools and vulnerable students at this critical time.

Lisa Guisbond, Executive Director, **Citizens for Public Schools (CPS)**

Beth Kontos, President, **American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts (AFT-MA)**

Dr. Kimberly N. Parker, President, **Black Educators Alliance of Massachusetts (BEAM)**

Ruby Reyes, Director, **Boston Education Justice Alliance (BEJA)**

Rev. Willie Bodrick, II, Chair, **Boston Network for Black Student Achievement (BNBSA)**

Jessica Tang, President, **Boston Teachers Union (BTU)**

Kathleen Boundy, Co-Director, **Center for Law and Education (CLE)**

Blakely Bundy and Denisha Jones, Co-Directors, **Defending the Early Years (DEY)**

Doug Selwyn and Pixie Holbrook, **Franklin County Continuing the Political Revolution (FCCPR)**

Iván Espinoza-Madrigal, Executive Director, **Lawyers for Civil Rights (LCR)**

Vatsady Sivongxay, Executive Director, **Massachusetts Education Justice Alliance (MEJA)**

Merrie Najimy, President, **Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA)**

Roger Rice, Executive Director, **Multicultural Education, Training & Advocacy, Inc. (META)**

Ricardo Rosa, Co-Chair, **New Bedford Coalition to Save Our Schools (NBCSOS)**

Juan Cofield, President, **NAACP, New England Area Conference (NEAC)**

Gwen Volmar, Coordinating Committee, **Our Revolution Cambridge**

Harneen Chernow and Mary Battenfeld, **Quality Education for Every Student (QUEST)**

Cambridge Educators of Color Coalition Leadership Team

Jasper Coughlin, Student representative to the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE)*

Mary Ann Stewart, Parent representative to the Massachusetts BESE*

Affiliations provided for identification purposes only. The individuals are speaking for themselves on this issue.

February 17, 2021

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Read MTA testimony in support of MCAS moratorium

August 10, 2020

Massachusetts Teachers Association President Merrie Najimy submitted the following testimony today in support of **S.2814, An Act responding to the COVID-19 emergency by instituting a moratorium of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System** (<https://malegislature.gov/Bills/191/S2814>)

The world has changed dramatically in the past six months. The COVID-19 pandemic has upended our lives in ways unimaginable in February, challenging our ability to knit together routines that feel safe, nurturing, and stable. During the worst economic crisis in 80 years, cracks in our social fabric have allowed long-suppressed voices to demand immediate change to eliminate systemic racism and structural inequality. The Massachusetts Legislature has been a leading voice in responding to this demand for justice, and it should be again.

A year ago, the Legislature rose to this challenge by passing the *Student Opportunity Act* — a generational investment in public education that takes one step toward dismantling systemic inequality and racism. This summer, the House and Senate took major steps to pass police reform legislation to eliminate police brutality and dismantle structural racism in our criminal justice system. Now is the time to pass **S.2814** (<https://malegislature.gov/Bills/191/S2814>) and put a moratorium on administration of the MCAS, allowing the educational community to join with you to rethink high-stakes testing, school quality measures, and student assessment.

"It is absolutely clear that the MCAS tests should not be administered during this academic year or over the next few years."

It is absolutely clear that the MCAS tests should not be administered during this academic year or over the next few years. As you know, school districts across the state are struggling to determine the safest and best way to engage students in learning this fall. This process is tumultuous and uneven across school districts in Massachusetts — and the country. Children's lives have been disrupted, and once again the trauma is most acute in communities of color, among low-income families and among people directly affected by COVID-19. Administering the MCAS will undermine our best efforts to tend to the social and emotional wellness of our students and truly meet their academic needs, as it will force us back into lockstep teaching to prepare for the test. The results of the MCAS exams will be meaningless. The damage done through administration of the tests, however, will be very real.

MCAS bill

S.2814, filed by Senator Jo Comerford (D-Northampton), establishes a four-year moratorium on MCAS tests and forbids the high-stakes use of standardized tests.

Realistically, this school year is at risk of being deeply chaotic. We are demanding a great deal of our entire educational community — students, educators and other staff, administrators, and parents and guardians. They are being asked to keep conditions safe, adjust to changes, support one another emotionally, and teach and learn. In recent discussions about the new school year, every single educational leader in the state has focused on the need to support the mental health and social and emotional well-being of students. We all agree that is of the utmost importance. Meeting this challenge — which we must — is incompatible with weeks of prepping and administration of a high-stakes test. Doing so will provoke anxiety in students, reduce time on learning, and waste the energy of the entire school community.

As you know, the MTA has long advocated for changes in school quality measures, student assessment, and curriculum so that they affirm and uplift the complex identities of our students. These are some of the very demands of the **Black Lives Matter in Schools movement** (<https://massteacher.org:443/news/2020/06/say-their-names>), which the MTA Board of Directors has voted to support. Many of our arguments against MCAS have focused on not only *what* but *who* gets left out of the curriculum when we prioritize testing.

"If we are serious about raising student performance, then this is our time to shift away from MCAS and toward transforming teaching pedagogy, practice, and curriculum to align with the demands of the Black Lives Matter movement."

When I was in elementary school, my basal reader was *Dick and Jane*. As an Arab-American child, I was angry at the book, since the characters and plot had absolutely no resemblance to my family and my life. I made faces at the characters and scribbled on the pages to the point of tearing them. I never understood the root of my rage with *Dick and Jane* until I became an educator in 1990, when the multicultural education movement was reaching its peak. It was only then that I understood that my feelings for *Dick and Jane*, and throughout school in general, were feelings of alienation from and marginalization by the curriculum. It was then that I understood the direct connection between self-affirming curriculum and instructional practices — or lack thereof — and student performance. My experience with a whitewashed curriculum from which I disengaged led me to accept my own mediocrity as a student. I quite frankly did not care about school because I did not see myself and my culture represented there.

MCAS stifled the multicultural education movement — which gave students the self-affirmation that I missed when I was in school. MCAS took us back to curriculum and standards that have erased the histories and culture of our multiracial, multiethnic student body. MCAS is directly responsible for “lowering student performance.”

To this end, now is the time for change (<https://massteacher.org:443/news/2020/06/mta-backs-comerford-bill-calling-for-mcas-moratorium>). This pandemic is deeply challenging to us all. But it is also creating opportunities for us as a community to reassess and rethink our priorities. If we are serious about raising student performance, then this is our time to shift away from MCAS and toward transforming teaching pedagogy, practice, and curriculum to align with the demands of the Black Lives Matter movement.

We have also argued that standardized test results reflect existing inequities in our education system and society and then exacerbate them by unjustly ranking students, schools, and districts by their scores — and then forcing them into antidemocratic and improperly prescriptive reform measures. This is the right time to rethink this approach.

To address this challenge, the MTA supports **S.2814 (<https://malegislature.gov/Bills/191/S2814>)**, which establishes a four-year moratorium on the administration of the MCAS tests and on using any standardized tests to make high-stakes decisions about students, educators, schools, and districts. The legislation also requires that the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education request a waiver from the U.S. Department of Education of the requirements for statewide assessment, accountability, and reporting requirements established in the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

A moratorium on the administration of the MCAS and the high-stakes graduation requirement would reduce time spent on test preparation and focus schools on the crucial need to help students recover socially and emotionally and engage in learning. Educators assess student learning and development throughout the year, and the MCAS moratorium will have no negative effect on the ability of school districts to identify the needs of students. However, the moratorium will serve as an overdue opportunity to assess the impact of the state's testing and school and district evaluation systems on education and engage in conversations about what we want for our students and our schools — and to decide how best to achieve those goals.

The proposed legislation also calls for the establishment of a commission to review the state's experience with its current systems of school and district visioning, goal setting, evaluation, and accountability. The commission would be charged with hearing from educators, parents, students, and school districts about how best to center racial and social justice and incorporate elements of the social, emotional, and physical health of students and staff — as well as opportunities for instruction in civics, arts and creative expression, communication, and social skills — into the core mission of all public schools. To inform its work, the commission would establish a grant program supporting school districts across the state in piloting locally derived school and district evaluation models. The result would be, we hope, legislation that forges a consensus on a new approach that brings together the best thinking and experience of our educational community.

We have seen you listen, respond, and lead on the most critical issues facing our society during this pandemic. We support your efforts to dismantle institutional racism and engage in difficult conversations about the urgent need for justice and change. We believe deeply that this year is the time to embrace further justice and change in our schools. We ask you to support and pass **S.2814, An Act responding to the COVID-19 emergency by instituting a moratorium of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (<https://malegislature.gov/Bills/191/S2814>)**.



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SENATE No.**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

PRESENTED BY:

Joanne M. Comerford*To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:*

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the adoption of the accompanying bill:

An Act responding to the COVID-19 emergency by instituting a moratorium on the administration of the MCAS test for the 2020-2021 school year.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	
<i>Joanne M. Comerford</i>	<i>Hampshire, Franklin and Worcester</i>	
<i>Mindy Domb</i>	<i>3rd Hampshire</i>	<i>2/19/2021</i>
<i>Maria Duaine Robinson</i>	<i>6th Middlesex</i>	<i>2/19/2021</i>
<i>Christina A. Minicucci</i>	<i>14th Essex</i>	<i>2/22/2021</i>
<i>Sheila C. Harrington</i>	<i>1st Middlesex</i>	<i>2/25/2021</i>
<i>Brendan P. Crighton</i>	<i>Third Essex</i>	<i>3/1/2021</i>
<i>James J. O'Day</i>	<i>14th Worcester</i>	<i>3/4/2021</i>
<i>Angelo J. Puppolo, Jr.</i>	<i>12th Hampden</i>	<i>3/5/2021</i>
<i>Carmine Lawrence Gentile</i>	<i>13th Middlesex</i>	<i>3/8/2021</i>
<i>Michael O. Moore</i>	<i>Second Worcester</i>	<i>3/9/2021</i>
<i>John H. Rogers</i>	<i>12th Norfolk</i>	<i>3/9/2021</i>
<i>Christopher Hendricks</i>	<i>11th Bristol</i>	<i>3/10/2021</i>

SENATE No.

[Pin Slip]

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE SENATE, NO. 2814 OF 2019-2020.]**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

In the One Hundred and Ninety-Second General Court
(2021-2022)

An Act responding to the COVID-19 emergency by instituting a moratorium on the administration of the MCAS test for the 2020-2021 school year.

Whereas, The deferred operation of this act would tend to defeat its purpose, which is to establish forthwith a moratorium on the administration of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System in response to the COVID-19 emergency, therefore it is hereby declared to be an emergency law, necessary for the immediate preservation of the public convenience.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

SECTION 1. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the commissioner of elementary and secondary education shall submit to the United States Department of Education a request that the Commonwealth's statewide assessment, accountability and reporting requirements under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act be waived for the 2020-2021 school year. The request shall be made pursuant to section 8401 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and shall include a request to waive the assessment requirements in section 1111(b)(2); the accountability and school identification requirements in sections 1111(c)(4) and 1111(d)(2)(C)-(D); and the report card provisions related to assessments and accountability in section 1111(h).

SECTION 2. Upon receipt of a waiver under section 1 or any other authority under federal law, rule or regulation, notwithstanding sections 1D and 1I of chapter 69 of the General Laws or any other general or special law to the contrary, the department of elementary and secondary education shall not administer, implement or use the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System exam for any purpose for the 2020-2021 school year.

report of the resolutions committee

The members of the Resolutions Committee met virtually on June 25, 2020 to consider resolutions proposed by member districts and the MASC Board of Directors for consideration at the 2020 Annual Meeting of the Association. Members present were: Ellen Holmes, Chair, Ex-Officio, Ashburnham-Westminster Regional; Deborah Davis, Northeast Metropolitan Voc. Tech.; Barbara Davis, Holbrook; Margaret Hughes, Narragansett Regional; Laura Fallon, Northampton; Irene Feliciano-Sims, Holyoke; William Fonseca, East Longmeadow; Jason Fraser, Silver Lake Regional; Beverly Hugo, Framingham; Mildred Lefebvre, Holyoke; Stacey Rizzo, Revere; Wendy Rua, Agawam; Lynn Ryan Assabet Voc. Tech.; Paul Schlichtman, Arlington; and Robert Swartz, Gardner.

The following resolutions were moved forward by the Resolutions Committee and approved by the Board of Directors.

RESOLUTION 1: MCAS AND HIGH STAKES TESTING

(Submitted by the MASC Board of Directors)

WHEREAS the MASC Membership and MASC Board of Directors have previously and repeatedly taken the position of opposing high stakes testing including the MCAS; and

WHEREAS the COVID-19 Remote Learning Model has negatively and disproportionately affected students with learning disabilities, students of lower socioeconomic status, ELL students and students who identify as minorities; and

WHEREAS the social and emotional trauma both individually and collectively has yet to be truly realized in the students who have experienced the shutdown of their local school buildings and separations from their peers and supportive adults; and

WHEREAS the students of the Commonwealth have already missed valuable face to face instructional opportunities with their teachers and would benefit from focusing on those important instructional opportunities and social emotional supports;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that MASC rejects the calls for the students of 2022 who missed their tenth grade MCAS testing to be required to make it up during the 2020-2021 school year or ever. We demand those students be held harmless for not taking the MCAS and that their graduation requirements shall be determined by locally controlled voices of the School Committee and School Administration within the remaining graduation requirements of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Additionally, we reiterate our call for a moratorium on all high stakes testing for the 2020-2021 school year so all students can benefit from their time being focused on direct instruction and we urge the legislature to enact a moratorium on high stakes testing of three years.

RESOLUTION 2: COVID-19 STATE FUNDING

(Submitted by the MASC Board of Directors)

WHEREAS if schools are to re-open this fall in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is the responsibility of each school district to do so safely and responsibly; and

WHEREAS it is the responsibility of the state to ensure that each school district is able to pay for the enormous additional staffing, transportation and material expenses required to do this; and

WHEREAS the state cannot expect mandatory COVID-19 safety guidelines to be followed without also ensuring that each school district has the funds required to implement these guidelines;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the state must guarantee every school district full reimbursement for whatever COVID-19 expenses are required to follow state mandates. We must ensure a statewide school re-opening that is safe, responsible and equitable. There can be no unfunded mandates for COVID-19.

RESOLUTION 3: SCHOOL COMMITTEE ANTI-RACISM RESOLUTION

(Submitted by the MASC Board of Directors)

WHEREAS as schools have the responsibility to equip students with their civil right of obtaining a free and appropriate public education, it is the responsibility of each school to ensure we create a welcoming community for ALL students; and

WHEREAS it is the responsibility that every district provide to all district staff, including School Committee members, annual professional development on diversity, equity and inclusion; and

WHEREAS every district will commit to recruiting and retaining a diverse and culturally responsive teaching workforce; and

WHEREAS every district will examine their policies for institutional and systemic racialized practices and implement change with sustainable policies that are evidence based; and

WHEREAS every district will incorporate into their curriculum the history of racial oppression and works by black authors and works from diverse perspectives; and

WHEREAS we as school district leaders can no longer remain silent to the issues of racism and hate that continue to plague our public and private institutions;

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WHEREAS the COVID-19 Remote Learning Model has negatively and disproportionately affected students with learning disabilities, students of lower socioeconomic status, ELL students and students who identify as minorities; and

WHEREAS the social and emotional trauma both individually and collectively has yet to be truly realized in the students who have experienced the shutdown of their local school buildings and separations from their peers and supportive adults; and

WHEREAS the students of the Commonwealth have already missed valuable face to face instructional opportunities with their teachers and would benefit from focusing on those important instructional opportunities and social emotional supports;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that MASC rejects the calls for the students of 2022 who missed their tenth grade MCAS testing to be required to make it up during the 2020-2021 school year or ever. We demand those students be held harmless for not taking the MCAS and that their graduation requirements shall be determined by locally controlled voices of the School Committee and School Administration within the remaining graduation requirements of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Additionally, we reiterate our call for a moratorium on all high stakes testing for the 2020-2021 school year so all students can benefit from their time being focused on direct instruction and we urge the legislature to enact a moratorium on high stakes testing of three years.

Bill calls for moratorium on MCAS as Massachusetts graduation requirement

Posted Jun 18, 2019

By State House News Service

Educators and advocates on Monday urged lawmakers to press the pause button on the use of the state's standardized test program as a graduation requirement and a component of school accountability measures.

Bills filed by Rep. Marjorie Decker and Sen. Michael Rush would impose a three-year moratorium on what critics describe as the "high-stakes" nature of the MCAS

exam, temporarily halting consideration of the results for graduation, accountability rankings, and teacher evaluations.

Supporters of the bills told the Education Committee that the MCAS tests are not working as intended, and a break would give state education officials a chance to come up with new methods of measuring student and school performance.

Jack Schneider, research director for the Massachusetts Consortium for Innovative Education Assessment, said standardized tests can act as a gauge of family income, race, and parents' educational attainment, while not always capturing "many facets of a good school."

"The solution is to figure out how not to simply measure demography in disguise while at the same time measuring the many things that good schools do," he said.

"Now, if you don't do that, we will continue to suffer from the unintended consequences of the present system that we have. Just to name a couple of those, teaching to the test, which is absolutely incentivized by the current system, narrowing of the curriculum, which is also incentivized by the present system, stigmatization of low-income and historically marginalized racial groups, which is absolutely linked to the current system, and the systemic disengagement of young

people in districts that will not, by virtue of their demography, automatically get high test scores."

In addition to the moratorium, the bills (H 431, S 328) would create a grant program that would support districts in the development and piloting of "alternative assessment models" and would direct the state auditor to audit the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and its contract practices at least every three years.

"Data shows that high stakes testing doesn't measure outcomes that matter.

Assessments are good, but these tests have done nothing to shrink the achievement gap," Decker posted on Twitter.

Massachusetts has required students to pass the MCAS test in order to graduate high school since 2003. State education officials in 2016 embarked on an effort to overhaul the exam into a "next-generation" MCAS taken on a computer.

No one testified against the moratorium bills at Monday's hearing. A total of 42 lawmakers are signed on to the House bill, and 12 on the Senate bill. There are 40 seats in the Senate and 160 in the House.

The Education Committee last session included a similar bill in a study order, effectively killing it.

Rep. James Kelcourse, an Amesbury Republican, asked supporters what would happen without the MCAS requirements in place. He said he attended high school before there was testing, but there was a reason the exam model was put in place.

In response, Hull fifth-grade teacher Deb McCarthy described the dynamics in her district during testing periods and said the MCAS experience has changed since the exam was first launched.

"In that time it has morphed into two months of a testing warehouse at our elementary school, grades three through five, where kindergarten schedules are changed, lunch schedules are changed," she said. "I no longer have a paraprofessional in my classroom. All of our resources are reallocated to the score, because in Hull we're constantly treading water to make sure we don't come below that accountability measure that will put us into a category that's to shame and blame."